

Libraries are often seen as safe, peaceful spaces for learning, community engagement, and public access to resources. However, like any public space, libraries can be vulnerable to various emergencies. Knowing that emergencies can and have happened, I have been researching panic button systems.

First up was talking to the Branch County Courthouse and the Commission on Aging (COA) regarding the systems they use. Both use a company called Response Technologies, but in slightly different fashion. The courthouse is able to contact law enforcement directly, and the COA's system will contact staff members to respond to the emergency.

There are two options from Response Technologies.

- Option 1: In emergencies, a duress button is pushed. This option is a little more tech-heavy, with the need to install a head end unit, and every location needs to have a gateway. It does contact 911 directly. This is the more expensive option, and in our case, not the one that they would recommend.
- Option 2: Response Technologies developed a mobile sensor product focusing on lone worker and individual safety called the Anywhere Badge. It is a Bluetooth duress button that pairs with a cellular phone or tablet through an app. The duress button is placed on a card that can be discreetly clipped to clothing, worn around the neck, or carried in a pocket, allowing quick access when you need it. When activated, the notification is sent to a list of established contacts, and the first responders receive the message and location of the user within seconds. There is an annual cost for the badges, and a one-time setup fee. To the company this one made the most sense for our multiple locations.

Two other companies were contacted. One from California that was recommended to me by another library. The second was a local security alarm company used at one of our locations. Both companies originally seemed interested, but after repeated attempts to get more information and quotes, they have stopped responding to my calls and emails.

I have reached out to the Sheriff's Department and the Coldwater City Police to discuss their opinions and experiences with panic buttons.

What is the board's experience and opinion of panic buttons?

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